



Testimony of Ryan Lynch, senior planner and Connecticut coordinator
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Connecticut Legislature—Joint Committee on Transportation
February 22, 2009

An Act Concerning Congestion Pricing on Connecticut's Highways

My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the senior planner and Connecticut coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization working towards a more balanced, transit-friendly and socially-equitable transportation and development systems in CT, NY and NJ.

I write to urge the Transportation Committee to support either Senate Bill No. 445 or House Bill No. 6269. Both would implement congestion pricing on certain Connecticut roadways.

Tri-State has long supported congestion pricing as a way to reduce congestion and generate revenue, and we are asking Connecticut's residents and elected officials give the concept a chance.

Here are a few reasons why:

- Congestion on the state's roads causes the economy to lose close to \$500 million a year in excess fuel consumption, loss of productivity and delays. This number is staggering considering our current economic downturn and the fact that it fails to factor in the health care and environmental costs that pollution from idling cars causes.
- Connecticut's roads and bridges are some of the worst in the country, ranking 10th worst and 5th worst, respectively, in the country.
- Meanwhile, the vital funds to maintain and repair this system, as well as, expand our transit systems, the Special Transportation Fund, is set to run a deficit by the end of 2010.

Something has to be done. New and innovative funding mechanisms need to be considered if Connecticut intends to have enough resources to fund a 21st century, multi-modal, transportation system.

It is no surprise that you may hear that people don't want to pay for something that was previously free, or that certain industries will pass along a new fee to their customers. We urge to you consider these comments, but ultimately heed precedent and facts.

Last year New York City proposed a similar measure to fund its transportation system and reduce congestion, a measure that was widely supported by business, labor, transit and environmental groups.

There is a reason that the Partnership for New York City, the City's premier business group, was, and still is, an ardent supporter of the policy. Reduced congestion equals reduced travel time. This in turn equates to more deliveries in shorter time periods.

The recent report by Cambridge Systematics outlines some plausible concepts to consider, such as corridor congestion pricing and converting HOV lanes on I-91 and I-84 into High Occupancy Tolling lanes, also called HOT lanes, which are HOV lanes that allow solo drivers to enter if they pay a fee.

Either idea is worthwhile and should be fine tuned through thoughtful legislation. In particular, any legislation concerning the proposal to implement congestion pricing along the congested I-95 and Route 15 corridor should dedicate funds generated to maintaining the existing road and bridge infrastructure of this heavily traveled corridor. Doing so could possibly free up state funds to expand the transit network, promoting transit oriented development around rail and bus stations, invest in bike and pedestrian infrastructure and support shuttle routes to facilitate getting more riders on trains, all ideas that would mitigate unwanted trip diversions to local roads and address the current dearth of parking at commuter rail stations.

HOV to HOT lanes is another viable method of providing driving choice while reducing congestion and generating revenue. The report suggests that HOT lanes on I-84 and I-91 may not create a surplus in revenue when taking into consideration initial capital and operating costs but they would save vehicle hours traveled by 8.1% and 13.4% in peak times on I-84 and I-91, respectively. We echo the report's call to take a closer look at this concept. It has shown to be a revenue generator elsewhere and should be thoroughly considered in Connecticut.

Whatever you decide, please remember that our population is growing; yet funding for our transportation network through state and federal gas taxes is diminishing. Twenty first century funding mechanisms for a 21st century transportation system are needed.

Much like the congestion on our roads if no action is taken, these ideas are not going away. They are the future of transportation funding in this country. However, what will go away is the opportunity to implement these concepts relatively cheaply. If we delay, implementation will be more expensive and the revenue return will be smaller, but the costs of congestion on our roads will get larger, further hurting our economy, environment and quality of life.

I urge the Transportation Committee, the General Assembly and Governor Rell, to please consider the options available to you and act with a sense of urgency.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.